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> New EU rules to protect against strategic lawsuits against public participation enter into force

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New EU rules to protect against strategic lawsuits against public participation enter into force

On Monday, the novel EU rules on combatting the use of strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs) enter into force. SLAPPs are unfounded and abusive legal actions that aim to silence those working in the public interest on matters such as fundamental rights, the environment, and public access to information. For the first time ever, a system of powerful procedural safeguards for cross-border SLAPP cases are in place. These safeguards will equip courts to deal with abusive litigation, as well as deter potential claimants from engaging in such practices. Persons targeted by a SLAPP can request for their case to be dismissed early as manifestly unfounded. Additionally, claimants who have brought abusive court proceedings against public participation can be ordered to bear the cost of the proceedings and may also face penalties and other measures.

Věra **Jourová**, Vice-President for Values and Transparency, said: "The right to freedom of expression and information, including the respect for the freedom and pluralism of the media are fundamental rights and core values of the European Union. SLAPPs undermine these fundamental rights and hinder the work of those being the watchdogs of our democracies. The new rules will protect those working and acting in the public interest from actions that aim to censor, harm, harass, and silence them."

The new rules are aimed at addressing the growing number of abusive lawsuits against journalists, media outlets, and human rights defenders. Member States have now two years at the latest to transpose the rules into their national systems. This Directive forms a package together with the Commission's Recommendation on anti-SLAPP, which was adopted in 2022 and is already being implemented. This anti-SLAPP package is part of a broader series of initiatives to strengthen media freedom and pluralism in the EU, including the Media Freedom Act and a Recommendation to improve the safety of journalists. More information can be found here.

Details

Department

Publication date

Directorate-General for Justice and Consumers Author

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Protecting journalists and human rights defenders from strategic lawsuits against public participation (SLAPPs)

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